Tribute of Love

to his

Father and Mother

By EUGENE V. DEBS

Golden Wedding Anniversary

OF

JEAN DANIEL DEBS AND MARGUERITE BETTRICH DEBS AT TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA, SEPTEMBER 13TH, 1899

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Golden Wedding Anniversary

The celebration of a Golden wedding is a rare occurrence in the history of families; only to the favored few is such a blessing vouchsafed. It is an occasion when nuptial vows pledged at Hymen's altar take on inexpressible sacredness. A far distant day is recalled when "two souls with but a single thought" and two loving hearts that "beat as one," courageously and confidently entered upon the voyage of matrimonial life. Thomas Moore, inspired by the genius of love, rapturously sang:

"There's a bliss beyond all that the minstrel has told,
When two, that are linked in one heavenly tie,
With heart never changing and brow never cold,
Live on thro' all ills, and love on till they die."

It is not given to us children and grandchildren, who meet today at the old home shrine to lay our offerings, consecreated by our affection, upon the family altar, to know the heart and soul yearnings of our aged parents to find some favored spot, some oasis in the desert, where they could build a home and enjoy the fruitions of peace and contentment amidst a family of bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked and merry-voiced children.

In fancy's eye we see their beautiful and vine-clad native France; we see them in the bloom and strength of youth, standing at the altar and pledging to each other unchanging fidelity in storm and shine, ready to meet the future as the days unfolded their duties, their opportunities, their tasks and trials, sustained by a faith and hope which cheered them on their pilgrimage through all their married days.

Those of us who have reached years of maturity and are here with wives and husbands and children and children's children, may in fancy's telescopic vision see the youthful pair leaving the old for the new world, whispering to each other with brimful eyes and quivering lips:

"Go where we will, this hand in thine,
Those eyes before me smiling thus,
Through good and ill, through storm and shine,
The world's a world of love for us."

And such has been the world to them. Love has been their guiding star; no cloud ever obscured it; and the darker the day of adversity the brighter shone their love which bathed their home and our home in its mellow, cheering light.

In celebrating this golden wedding anniversary, all the halcyon days of our lives are included and there come to us messages from the past, under the sea and over the land, burdened with the aroma of violets and roses, caught from the flower gardens of memory, planted in youth and blooming in perennial beauty to old age.

I confess to you, my venerable parents, and to you my sisters and brothers, and to those of younger generations, to overmastering emotions of love and gratitude as I survey this family scene, never to be pictured again save upon the canvas of our memories. But I would voice no requiem note. Today our ears are not attuned to the dirge's mournful cadence. This is not the occasion for planting weeping willows, the cypress or the ivy vine—

"Creeping where grim death is seen."

Here the mingled cup of love and gratitude and joy, brimful, is quaffed in honor of an event which to us all is a priceless

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benediction; but, if from its fountain a tear mingles with the draught to sparkle on the brim of the loving cup, it bears testimony that our hearts are touched by feelings as divine as ever sanctified human affection.

The serenity, the rare loveliness of this scene create emotions which no words, however fitly chosen, can express. I can but say in the name of my sisters and my brothers and those younger in the bonds of family allegiance to our father—the patriarch of these sons and daughters—that we tender him our warmest congratulations upon this rare occasion. When we greet him our hearts are in our hands; when we kiss his time-furrowed cheeks our hearts are on our lips, and when we congratulate him upon this, his golden wedding anniversary, our hearts are in our words.

Freely do we avow the fealty of our love for his devotion to us, his children, for his watchful guardianship over our giddy footsteps on youth's flowery pathways; and this love is blended with profound veneration for his courage, which no vicissitude could dampen; for his masculine virtues which have endeared him to the home circle; for his spotless integrity of character which has given him the confidence of men, whether in poverty's vale or upon the more elevated plane of prosperity, secured by industry and frugality, and above all, for that parental ambition and self-denial to secure for us an education which should equip his children for respectable and honorable positions in life.

This, my beloved and honored sire, is the tribute of affection your children bring to you today. Your tender and unceasing

devotion has won the overflowing gratitude of our hearts, and this thankfulness, this abounding sense of obligation, dearest father, we children with the fingers of our love weave today into a crown and place it on your venerable head, and though the years shall continue to whiten your locks, dim the lustre of your eyes and impair the strength of your manly form, the wealth of our affection shall ever increase, nor shall it cease when the silver cord be loosed and at the final goal you lay all your burdens down.

And now our happy family circle, rejoicing in kindred ties, will fill again the sparkling cup with the ambrosia of affection that we may drink to:

"My mother's voice! how often creep
It's accents on my lonely hours.
Like healing sent on wings of sleep,
Or dew to the unconscious flowers.
I can forget her melting prayer
While leaping pulses fly,
But in the still, unbroken air
Her gentle tone comes stealing by—
And years, and sin, and folly flee,
And leave me at my mother's knee."

There are two words in our language forever sacred to memory—Mother and Home! Home, the heaven upon earth, and mother its presiding angel. To us, children, here today, mother and home have realized all the longing, yearning aspirations of our souls, and now, in this blissful presence, we quaff to our mother this cup full and overflowing with the divine nectar of our love. I need not attempt to recite her deeds of devotion. There is not a page of our memory, not a tablet of our hearts, that is not adorned and beautified by acts of her loving care, in which her heart and her hands, her eyes and her soul, in holy alliance, ministered to our happiness.

There was never a time when there was not a song in her heart, sweeter than Aeolian melody, wooing her children from folly to the blessedness, security, peace and

contentment of home. Her children were her jewels in home's shining circle, and if by the fiat of death a gem dropped away, the affectionate care it had received added soulful charm to her lullaby songs when at night she dismissed us and sent us to dreamland repose.

Years of duty and trial, anxiety and care have bowed her form, whitened her hair, dimmed her eyes and robbed her cheeks of their maiden bloom; but O, our mother is still to us our beautiful mother. Her heart is as young and loving as when in infancy, in youth and in riper years it throbbed responsive to our plaints; her hands are as beautiful in our eyes as when in our childhood they were laid caressingly upon our heads, and her dimpled fingers smoothed our hair or wooed back to order our truant tresses, and her voice, though less rosonant than in the years when she called us from play to duty, has the same cadence as when bending over us she sang the cradle song which lulled to sleep and to dreams.

O, our mother! beloved more than any wealth of words could express, your children on this anniversary day of your wedding fifty years ago, offer you, aye, shower upon you in the name of filial devotion, all the holiest treasurers of garnered affection.

"We give thee all, we can no more,
Though poor the offering be;
Our hearts—our love is all the store
And this we bring to thee."

We hear the wedding bells ringing in celebration of the nuptials of our aged parents—our ears are attuned to their merry chimes and our hearts respond with all the joyousness of a wedding march, for peace and happiness and contentment crown the hour. We do not ask what the future has in store, we only know that we have the bride and groom in our presence, and that it is an inexpressible joy to pledge them anew our unfaltering devotion and our eternal love.